

Reason Faith and

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Contents

MAN AS A RATIONAL-MORAL BEING	5
REASON AND FAITH IN MEETING TEMPTATION	12
REASON, FAITH, AND THE PHYSICAL NATURE	22
REASON AND FAITH IN MAKING DECISIONS	33
REASON AND FAITH IN FORMING OPINIONS	40
REASON AND FAITH IN HUMAN RELATIONS	47
REASON AND FAITH IN THE QUEST FOR TRUTH	52

Man as a Rational-Moral Being

In the beginning God created man in His own image, a rational-moral being with a mind able to think and a conscience able to tell right from wrong. To this end the Creator endowed man with capacity to know, to reason, to believe, to make moral judgments, to desire, to choose, to will, and to act freely and responsibly on the basis of his knowledge, reason, faith, conscientious conviction, desire, choice, and will. We might compare man to a highly sophisticated electronic computer, programmed to function as a rational-moral being like its Maker, and able to translate its com-

plex computations into reality—to make its own dreams come true. A marvelous machine indeed!

The Designer equipped this computer with an amazing set of memory cells for storing a limitless amount of information fed into it by various sensory devices, and derived from experience. It can draw upon this reservoir of knowledge at will, combining the requisite bits of information to solve the problems life submits to it. This process we call reason, and its product, wisdom.

But despite being thus essentially in the image of the infinite God, man was still a finite being. There were limits to his ability. For one thing, it was inherently impossible for him to know, from personal observation and experience, anything about his own origin and destiny—who he was, where he had come from, why he was here, and what his Maker expected of him and intended for him. It was equally impossible for him to know with consistent certainty, on the basis of his own knowledge and experience, what is morally right and what is wrong, or to determine the ultimate results of any particular course of action.

Faith as a Balance for Reason

To supply this lack the Creator revealed—fed into the computer, if you please—sufficient information to enable man to rise above his finite lim-

itations, to relate wisely and responsibly to his life environment, and thus to develop character. As the senses and reason were designed to place man in touch with his natural environment, so faith was to connect him with his supernatural environment and to provide him with a knowledge of his origin, duty, and destiny. Faith added to reason would enable him to relate wisely and responsibly to the Creator's purpose for him.

Inasmuch as it was impossible for man to attain to this information by sensory observation or through personal experience, he would have to accept it by faith. But how could he do so when this revelation might appear, at this point or that, to be in conflict with his own finite observation, knowledge, reason, and desire? Indeed, at some points conflict would seem inevitable—unless the Designer chose to program His human computer to preclude such a possibility. But then man would no longer be a free and responsible moral being. Like man-made computers, he would be nothing more than another robot, able to do only what he is told to do.

The only way in which man could have positive faith in what God revealed to him—comparable to the confidence he felt he could have in his own sensory perception and in the conclusions to which reason led him—was by prior faith in the One who

made the revelation. God never intended faith to be "blind," in the sense of a passive acceptance of someone else's word without reasonable evidence that this source spoke with knowledge, authority, and beneficent motives. That would be credulity. Accordingly, God provided finite reason with an adequate foundation of tangible evidence susceptible to sensory and rational verification as a basis for faith in His revealed will.

Only so could God expect man to accept with assurance this revealed information, to which he could not otherwise attain and which was not commensurate with sensory experience and his ordinary powers of reason. Faith was thus designed to complement reason, and to protect it from error when reason was checkmated by its own finite limitations. Without faith man would be in a permanent state of amnesia—never quite sure who he is, where he came from, why he is here, and where he is going—and thus unable to function effectively as a free and responsible moral being, as the Creator intended.

Conscience, Desire, and the Power of Choice

God could have commissioned an angel to stand by man's side throughout life, to tell him upon each occasion what is right and what is wrong, and what he ought to do. But such a man

would be a moral robot, quite unworthy of the Creator and certainly not in His image. Accordingly, God supplied man with a conscience which, when properly trained, would have the capacity to make moral judgments on its own responsibility. We might say that conscience is a sort of moral radar by which a person can “see” the otherwise invisible, detect unseen dangers, avoid them, and keep safely on course.

Knowledge, reason, revelation, faith, and conscience—even these did not completely equip man to act as a responsible moral being. He would need some incentive to make a positive, firm choice and to act in accordance with it. There must be desire for, as well as knowledge of, what is true, right, and good. To this end God equipped man with the capacity for emotions—the capacity to desire or love that which is good and to hate that which is evil. Only the desire or love for what is true, right, and good could provide the necessary motive power for making wise choices and acting upon them. Like conscience, the desires or emotions need to be properly trained before they can serve as reliable guides to duty and action.

The last gadget in the computer circuit is man’s power of will, an electric spark that ignites the mixture of knowledge, reason, revelation, faith, conscientious conviction, and desire into a posi-

tive choice and transmits a directive to the motor nerves to act accordingly. This completes the circuit and enables the masterpiece of God's creative power, though finite, to function in a free and responsible way.

Without *knowledge* a man is an idiot. Lacking the power of *reason* he is a moron. Deprived of *faith* he is an agnostic, forever bound by the shackles of his own finite limitations. Without a properly trained *conscience* he is an incurable delinquent or criminal, incompetent to distinguish between right and wrong. Without emotional *desire* he is like a car without a self-starter that must be cranked every time the motor is started. Without the *power of choice* he is a robot. Without *will power* he is like a man in a perpetual state of nightmare, his motor nerves paralyzed. All these faculties are essential to constitute man in the image of his Creator and to enable him to function effectively as a rational-moral being and thus to fulfill the infinite purpose that gave him existence.

Information—the Raw Material of Thought

Next let us inquire how man assimilates information through sensory experience and faith, synthesizes it, and applies it in finding a solution to the moral problems he encounters in life. In particular, let us consider the effect of sin on the

various components of man's psychological anatomy, and ways in which this information can be helpful in finding right solutions to the problems.

There are two basic ways in which a man can acquire information, the raw material on which reason operates—by sensory experience, and by faith in the revelation God has given. Information derived through the senses relates primarily to the natural world of which man himself is part, while information acquired by faith in the revealed will of God relates primarily to the great problems of man's origin, moral duty, and destiny. Revelation and faith equip man with knowledge to which he could not attain on the basis of sensory experience and reason alone.

The primary objective of knowledge acquired by faith is to enable us to rise above our finite limitations, and to weigh the things and opportunities of time—which have been entrusted to us as instruments for the development of character—from the vantage point of eternity. Only those who learn to use the things and opportunities of time aright can expect to be trusted with the "true riches" of eternity (see Luke 16:11). Only the servant who improves the "few things" of this life will ever be promoted to rule over the "many things" of the future life (see Matt. 25:20, 21). This life is a training school for the hereafter.

Reason and Faith in Meeting Temptation

In his original state man was perfect. His faculties of knowledge, reason, faith, conscience, desire, choice, and will were in perfect balance. By nature he was predisposed to desire and to choose that which is true, right, and good. But sin upset the delicate balance, and cumbered him with a predisposition to desire and to choose what is false, wrong, and evil. It blinded his faculty of faith, and so warped his desires and his conscience as to render them unsafe guides to choice and action. It predisposed him to place more confidence in sensory information, which he can verify by his

own rational processes, than in information he must accept by faith. His desires became enslaved to that which is physical. Blind to his finite limitations, he tended to rely on his own judgment and to do that which seemed right in his own eyes.

To enter man's soul Satan must first gain control of one or more of his rational-moral faculties. He may distort the information the mind stores as knowledge, he may confuse reason, he may blunt faith, he may pervert conscience and desire, he may deprive a man of the power to choose and the will to act. Perhaps the weakest of these faculties are reason (which, being finite, is highly subject to error), faith (which requires acceptance of data that is not subject to sensory verification), and desire (which is easily influenced by physical appetites and inclinations).

Righteousness consists in the sanctified use of one's rational-moral faculties to choose that which is true, right, good, and beneficial. Evil consists in the prostitution of that which is inherently good, to wrong and selfish ends; sin is the perverted use of one's faculties to choose what is wrong.

An Appeal to Reason Apart From Faith

In his first fateful encounter with Eve at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tempter appealed to reason and desire apart from

faith. He presented her with partial truth, suggested a fallacious process of reasoning, destroyed her faith in God's word, blunted her conscience, aroused her desire for something God had said was not to be desired, and thus seduced her into making a wrong choice and acting upon it.

Satan argued that "the tree was good for food," that "it was pleasant to the eyes," and that it was "to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). Evidently the fruit *was* good for food, and it *was* pleasant to the eyes; that much Eve felt competent to judge for herself. It was evident, also, that by eating the fruit she would become wiser than she was before. Had not God Himself called it "the tree of the *knowledge* of good and evil" (chap. 2:17)? On this point Satan and God were evidently in agreement.

But there was a fatal difference. That difference lay in the respective estimates God and Satan placed on the value of the knowledge that would result from eating the fruit. God had said most emphatically that that knowledge was *not* to be desired. Satan countered that it *was* to be desired, and proceeded to explain why. At present, he pointed out, Eve knew only good. He implied that the essential difference between her and God was that God knew evil as well as good, and that it was the fruit which made the difference. God

knew this, he said, and had placed a taboo on the tree because He selfishly wanted to keep its fruit for Himself. Why not eat the fruit and become like God—by experiencing evil as well as good?

For Eve it was a matter of Satan's word against God's word. God had said, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (verse 17). The tempter countered, "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (chap. 3:4, 5).

The decision the tempter pressed upon Eve required information that lay beyond her own sensory knowledge and experience, in the realm of faith. She had no personal experience with the results of eating the fruit, and would have to take someone else's word for it. This information God had already provided, specifically as a protection against the sophistries of Satan. Should she accept the word of the Creator and Owner of the tree, or that of the fascinating serpent now perched in its branches and reasoning solicitously with her? Whom should she believe?

Sense, deprived of faith, led Eve to doubt what God had said, and in its place to believe the serpent's subtle logic. The result was a new and

exhilarating desire *for* the fruit, which replaced her former negative desire *against* it. This perverted desire prompted her to take the fruit and eat it, and then to share it with her companion. "It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority, that made our first parents transgressors."—*Education*, p. 25.

Safeguarding the Rational-Moral Faculties

Sin thus blunted man's ability to know truth, to reason, to practice faith, to maintain a reliable conscience, to desire what is right, to choose wisely, and to will. What measures can a Christian take to ensure the safe and reliable operation of his rational-moral faculties? Alert to the dangers that confront us in the exercise of these God-given faculties, we shall be better able to protect ourselves against erring when temptation accosts us, and as we attempt to cope with the many problems a person encounters on his journey through life.

The Creator designed that man, though finite, should have sufficient knowledge—attained through sensory experience and by faith in His revealed will—on which right reason, guided by an enlightened conscience and a desire for that which is true, right, and good, might be trusted to point the way to a free and responsible choice. But the evil one has blunted and perverted these rational-

moral faculties so that apart from the transforming grace of Christ man is no longer able to relate wisely to life and its problems. To what dangers need we be alert as we exercise these faculties with which the Creator endowed us?

First of all, we need constantly to remind ourselves that we are finite beings, and that our capacity to know is limited by many factors. At best, our knowledge is always incomplete and often inaccurate. Yet we tend to be unaware of this defect, and overconfident in the little we do know. However, we can compensate for this lack by remaining humbly aware of our finite limitations and by cultivating a desire and an alertness for truth. We can also weigh critically whatever purports to be true, before accepting it; and having accepted it, we will maintain an open mind, ever willing to examine additional, and even apparently contrary, evidence. There is no more effective bar to growth in knowledge and understanding than pride in one's preconceived opinions. Humility of mind, a teachable spirit, and a cautious evaluation of that which purports to be truth are priceless assets.

The Balance Between Reason and Faith

The faculty of reason—of applying one's store of information and experience to the problems of life—is indispensable to a rational-moral being

and yet subject to a legion of errors that warp a person's judgment. Right reason always involves certain basic assumptions (things we take for granted without direct proof), adequate information, and logical deductions. Are one's assumptions valid? Is the information reasonably complete, accurate, and reliable? Are the steps in the reasoning process sound, and do the conclusions we have drawn follow logically? Have bias, selfish desire, and preconceived opinion been eliminated, insofar as possible?

Like an impartial judge, we owe it to ourselves to test each step in the reasoning process for flaws. Bias, selfish motives, and rigid reliance on one's preconceived opinion prevent a fair examination and recognition of new truth. In fact, pride in one's own opinions is an effective barrier to all rational-moral progress. Pride of opinion and selfish motives transmute reason into rationalization, which is a search for excuses for believing what one wants to believe and for doing what one wants to do. Finally, and especially in matters involving the great facts of man's origin, nature, duty, and destiny, reason must always be kept in balance by faith in the revealed will of God.

In varying degree, the faculty of faith is subject to one or the other of two dangers. At one extreme is complete paralysis, and at the other, cre-

dulity and superstition. The former reflects overconfidence in reason as one's norm of belief and conduct, and the latter an immature, or perhaps impaired, faculty of reason. Intelligent faith needs the balance that sanctified, right reason can provide. Unbalanced by faith, reason is blind and incapable of evaluating ultimate truth and duty, and is thus prone to doubt even that which is true. Deprived of the critical faculty of reason, faith is blind and deteriorates into credulity and superstition. The Creator endowed man with both faith and reason, and is honored when he uses them in balance and applies them wisely, each in its proper sphere.

Conscience and Desire

A sound conscience trained to discriminate between good and evil, and not warped by selfish desire, can be an unerring guide to right choice and action. Its proper role is to monitor a person's application of principle to the problems of life, particularly in matters affecting one's relationships to God and to his fellow men. Conversely, an untrained conscience, or one contorted by selfish desire, is worthless. As with Paul, who once sincerely believed it his God-appointed duty to persecute Christians, it may err because of inaccurate or incomplete information. The conscience must be rigorously protected against ignorance, selfishness,

and the cumulative effect of wrong choices deliberately made. It can, all too easily, be trained to tell a person to believe what he wants to believe and to do what he wants to do, irrespective of principle.

Man was originally endowed with what we might call a natural tendency to desire that which is true, right, and good, and conversely to hate that which is false, wrong, and evil. But sin perverted that desire into an inherent preference for evil and a distaste for that which is good. As a result his natural desires and emotions are no longer the safe guide that they were before the Fall.

These natural desires and emotions must be rigorously brought under the control of principle by faith in God's revealed will, by sanctified reason, and by an educated conscience as the decisive factors in choice and action. Eventually, in the divine plan, the nature will be wholly transformed by divine grace, until, as a mature Christian, a person automatically and as a result of his own free choice wills to do only that which is right. (Read Romans 12:1-2.)

Freedom of Choice

Free choice is the personal application of one's knowledge, reason, faith, conscientious conviction, and desire to the practical problems of life. A wise

choice always involves adequate information, clear reasoning balanced by faith and approved by an enlightened conscience, and sanctified desire. The capacity to make such a choice between truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil, together with moral responsibility for a choice thus made, is what distinguishes man as a rational-moral being.

The important factor in making a free, responsible choice is that reason, faith, and conscience be applied, *in balance*, to the problem at hand. Danger arises from the suppression or perversion of any of these faculties. One's best protection against unwise choices is to cultivate the fixed habit of automatically acting from principle. Danger arises in making choices before the other faculties have had an opportunity to process the problem at hand, or of postponing choice beyond the point where duty becomes clear.

The will, the motive power of life, translates one's choices into action. The will to act should follow a choice properly made, at once and automatically. A paralyzed will and an impulsive will are alike fatal to character. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

Reason, Faith, and the Physical Nature

Let us now consider man's rational-moral faculties—his capacity to know and reason, to have faith and conscientious convictions, to desire, choose, will, and then act, freely and responsibly—in relation to temptation. What weaknesses in these faculties, resulting from our sinful nature, make us prone to fall into temptation, and what corresponding measures can we take to strengthen our defenses against temptation?

Sensory Experience

Our store of knowledge comes from sensory experience, and through faith in God's revealed will. The kind of information we accept for stor-

age in the memory cells of the brain is one of the decisive factors in meeting temptation. A man is what he thinks; as a man "thinketh in his heart [mind], so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The presence of that which is true, right, and good will encourage right choice and action, and that which is false, wrong, and evil will prompt wrong choice and action, for it is "out of the abundance of the heart [mind]" that a man speaks and acts (see Matt. 12:34; Phil. 4:8). Therefore, wrote the wise man, "Keep thy heart [mind] with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

"Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest."
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

Perhaps the most subtle delusion the devil ever invented is the notion that it is possible to associate, by choice and inclination, with people who may be congenial but who are under his control, or to experience evil vicariously via books and magazines, radio, television, or theatrical or other exhibitions, without being at least subconsciously influenced in the wrong direction. It is a simple psychological fact that every sensory impression,

and most particularly every impression voluntarily accepted, becomes a permanent part of the mind and character and conditions a person for yielding to temptation, or for resisting it.

We may not always be able to avoid momentarily seeing and hearing evil, but we can turn from it instantly and refuse to harbor it or let the mind dwell upon it. Voluntary mental input by way of the sensory nerves determines eventual output by way of the motor nerves. The rationalization that a person is strong enough voluntarily to witness evil without being adversely influenced by it is gross self-deception. Our only safety is to vow with the psalmist, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Ps. 101:3). We must conscientiously avoid seeing and hearing evil if we expect to avoid saying and doing—and being—evil.

But it is not enough to refuse to harbor evil sensory impressions in the brain; it is even more important, if possible, to occupy the mind with that which is true and right and good, and to train it to dwell on these things. Good is Heaven's antidote for evil. Like Christ, we must be able to foil the tempter with the words of Scripture, "It is written . . ." (Matt. 4:4, 6, 7). It is by giving heed to all of God's revealed will that we shall be able to cleanse our way, and by hiding His Word in our hearts be able to resist temptation (Ps. 119:9, 11).

To fortify the mind with truth is our best protection against the wiles of the devil.

Right Reason

Reason applies the information derived from sensory experience and through faith in God's revealed will to the practical problems of life. It applies principles to specific situations. One of the dangers that confronts reason in this process is overconfidence in one's own unaided judgment and ability to deal with a situation. That was Eve's difficulty. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). We need ever to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

Sometimes we pretend to ourselves that we do not know whether a thing is right or wrong, when we really do know. The lame excuse, "I can't see anything wrong with that," usually means, "I don't want to see anything wrong" with it. But we can know if we want to: "If any man *will* do his will, he shall know . . ." (John 7:17), said Jesus. Furthermore, He who reads the heart knows the motives that prompt our choices and our actions.

Another danger is willful neglect or even deliberate avoidance of inspired counsel, which God

has provided as a protection against temptation, in the erroneous belief that the resulting ignorance absolves a person from moral responsibility for his actions. We are accountable before God for truth we neglect to learn as certainly as we are for truth we know but ignore.

Still another danger to the reasoning process is rationalization; that is, looking for excuses for doing what natural inclination prompts us to do. "Temptations present themselves in such a way that the tempted think they see an excuse to transgress."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 598. "It is essential that we faithfully investigate the motives and principles of our conduct, comparing our actions with the standard of duty revealed in God's word."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 276.

Lacking an adequate knowledge of God's revealed will and the guidance of a sound conscience, reason is sure to err. All too often we permit pride, selfish desire, the appetites and passions, and love of the world to warp reason and blunt conscience.

Faith and the Conscience

Directly or indirectly, moral judgments rest on the inspired revelation of God's will, without which every man would be at liberty to set his own moral standards. We are in need of faith to believe that God's way is best for us, and that He will im-

part the strength we need, added to our own firm resolve, to resist evil. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). He does this by transforming our motives, by implanting a knowledge of His revealed will in our minds, and by imparting the Holy Spirit to convince conscience with respect to sin and righteousness (John 16: 8-11). Moses endured the temptations of Egypt because his eyes of faith were fixed on "him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It is by the promises He has placed on record in His Word that God enables us to escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

It has been said that conscience is the eye of God in the soul of man. That is true if the conscience has been rightly trained. But, like a magnetic needle, even a good conscience can easily be deflected by pride, selfish desire, and the devious processes of rationalization—unless it is adjusted, day by day, by reference to the revealed will of God. The apostle Paul found it necessary to "exercise" himself constantly in order "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16) lest it become "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2), and as a result, deaf to the promptings of the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 4:30).

The Physical Appetites and Passions

As in Eden, Satan is most successful with temptations directed at the appetites and passions of the physical nature, by means of which he arouses a desire for things that are physically and morally harmful, and therefore evil. His purpose is to corrupt man's moral nature by perverting his physical nature. Fleshly lusts, writes Peter, "war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). "Every man is tempted," James explains, "when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:14, 15).

"In all ages, temptations appealing to the physical nature have been most effectual in corrupting and degrading mankind. Through intemperance, Satan works to destroy the mental and moral powers that God gave to man as a priceless endowment. Thus it becomes impossible for men to appreciate things of eternal worth. Through sensual indulgence, Satan seeks to blot from the soul every trace of likeness to God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 122.

Physical and mental health are major assets in resisting temptation. The principles of healthful living set forth in the Bible and by Ellen G. White have been given, not only that we may attain to

physical health, but that we may also enjoy moral and spiritual health. Any departure from these principles weakens one's defenses against temptation.

Those who indulge appetite by intemperate eating of any kind—too much, between meals, or for taste instead of nourishment—thereby make themselves more susceptible to Satan's suggestions. Luxury caters to temptation, whereas abstemiousness in diet and in satisfying one's material wants is a protection against it. The iniquity of Sodom arose from "fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness" (Eze. 16:49).

Those to whom sex is a pressing allurements will find safety in a positive refusal to permit eye or ear or touch to linger on that which arouses passion, and in automatically, instantly, and resolutely repelling impure thoughts. An abstemious diet and vigorous physical exercise in the open air are especially helpful in resisting such temptations.

Sometimes, as an excuse for indulging in what we know is not best, we say, "I don't see anything wrong with that." Remember Eve? It was when something God had said was all wrong began to look all right to her that she took the fruit and ate it. To follow inclination is to surrender to the onslaughts of the evil one, whereas a firm decision to follow principle is a protection against his assaults on the citadel of the soul.

Dedication of the Physical Nature to Right Principles

We cannot expect to be able to resist temptation unless we first present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,” and are “transformed by the renewing of . . . [our] mind.” Only as this transformation takes place are we able to know the “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” and then do it (Rom. 12:1, 2). The love of the world must be completely uprooted from our hearts, for to love the world is to be blinded by its allurements (see 1 John 2:15, 16). Otherwise, evil tendencies within are certain to respond to evil that entices from without.

If we expect to be able to “run with patience the race that is set before us,” we must be willing to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12:1). We must crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts” and make no “provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 13:14). We must make it automatic to “hate the evil, and love the good” (Amos 5:15), in the realization that those who have “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” will fall before the “power and signs and lying wonders” with which Satan mines their pathway (2 Thess. 2:10, 9).

We should not needlessly expose ourselves to temptation by straying into the enemy's territory. "If you invite temptation, you will not have divine aid to keep you from being overcome," but "if you do not walk deliberately into temptation, God will sustain you when the temptation comes."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 47. "We must abstain from any practice which will blunt the conscience or encourage temptation. We must open no door that will give Satan access to the mind."—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 360.

Satan's fiercest attacks usually come when we are weary, disappointed, discouraged, or perplexed, or when, like Eve, we have wandered onto forbidden ground. Intemperance in physical exertion, whether by overwork or by idleness, weakens one's defenses against evil, whereas hard work and useful labor are a great safeguard against physical temptations of every kind. We are wisely counseled to "employ every spare moment in doing something," for "in this way an effectual door will be closed against a thousand temptations" (*ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 412).

The Role of Choice and the Will

As in war, one's best defense against temptation is offense. Only a firm, uncompromising decision *in advance* will prove to be a sufficient pro-

tection against the ambushes set for us by Satan and his imps. Don't wait till temptation comes before deciding what your reaction will be. By placing your will on the side of God's will, and by a resolute decision to act on principle instead of inclination, you will build an impregnable bulwark against the devil.

"Fight the good fight of faith," wrote Paul (1 Tim. 6:12). "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Be ready to resist "unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). Never parley with temptation, but instantly repel the first suggestion of evil. He who, like Eve, pauses to argue with the enemy will almost inevitably be overcome by him. Only the grace of God can enable us to use our moral-rational faculties to His honor and glory in the endless battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 32, 33.

Reason and Faith

in Making Decisions

Another aspect of life that calls for the balanced exercise of faith and reason is making decisions on complex, unusual, or otherwise perplexing problems. Here we are thinking of major decisions with respect to such matters as making a wise choice of a lifework or a life partner, or of reaching an intelligent decision in response to a vocational opportunity that is offered, or of planning wisely in matters affecting one's family or personal affairs.

First of all, we need facts—facts about ourselves, about other people who may be involved,

about the situation itself, and about obligations the choice would place upon us. Major decisions call for a fair and honest evaluation of one's own capacities and limitations. It is desirable to base important, perhaps irrevocable, decisions on as complete an array of information as we may reasonably be able to obtain. Decisions made with important facts missing are almost certain to be regretted later. A wise, durable decision with which we shall be content to live needs a firm foundation of facts.

With the facts in hand, reason enters the picture. Important decisions may call not only for additional information but also for perspective in weighing the facts—a perspective that our limited experience has not yet developed. To supply this lack we can seek the counsel of a friend or of someone with more experience. We would be unwise to expect him to make the decision for us, but we can benefit by the view of things that is possible from his vantage point of experience. The decision must be our own if it is to be free and responsible.

Divine Guidance in Decision Making

At the point of deciding—and in fact all along the way en route to making a decision—it is our privilege to believe that our personal affairs are of concern to God, and that if we commit our ways

to Him and purpose to live in harmony with all His revealed will, He will guide us to the information we need and help us to evaluate it wisely. At the same time we should bear in mind that God does not make our decisions for us. He has promised to guide us, but not to decide for us. He does not want us to be robots or puppets.

In leaning on God to make decisions for us that He intends us to make for ourselves by exercising the rational-moral faculties with which He has endowed us, we may be tempted to depend on supposed signs or other omens of the decision we want Him to make, in order to spare ourselves the effort and avoid the responsibility the decision entails.

This is not to deny that under extraordinary circumstances in which the normal exercise of these faculties might not lead us to a wise choice, or in which we might otherwise suffer eternal loss, or a decision that would result in irreparable damage to His cause on earth, He may use such means to guide us to a wise decision. It is simply to affirm that in the ordinary course of affairs He is not honored by an attempt to rely on such methods, for in doing so He would thwart His purpose to develop us into rational-moral beings in His own image, capable of making free and responsible decisions. Such methods are not a valid substitute

for a sanctified use of the intelligence and judgment with which the Creator has equipped us. They dishonor Him and debilitate our rational-moral faculties.

Avoiding Worry

The prospect of having to make an important decision may sometimes lead to worry, which is proper concern spinning away out of control like a team of runaway horses. Like an overheated motor or electrical circuit, worry serves no useful purpose and results in damage. We should educate ourselves not to worry, under any circumstances. Instead of worrying about things we can do something about, why not use the mental and emotional energy worry would burn up, to do something about them? Conversely, instead of worrying about things that are beyond our power to do anything about, let us conserve our strength for other things.

Where we do not as yet have all of the facts, and where the decision can be postponed without serious loss, worry can be avoided by the conscious exercise of suspended judgment—while we continue the search for more complete information or experienced counsel. Worry is usually the result of deficient or defective information, or of lack of experience in evaluating it. It is well also, when

possible, to avoid making important decisions when weary, ill, or discouraged.

“Seek the Lord for wisdom in every emergency. In every trial plead with Jesus to show you a way out of your troubles, then your eyes will be opened to behold the remedy and to apply to your case the healing promises that have been recorded in His Word.”—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 273.

“Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

Keeping Faith and Reason in Balance

In reaching decisions it is important to keep faith and reason in balance, remembering that neither is a proper substitute for the other. Under certain extraordinary circumstances—where adequate information and experience are lacking, and where the decision cannot be postponed long enough to obtain them—a special measure of faith is needed. This is particularly true where a moral obligation is involved in the choice, or where irrep-

arable damage would result from an unwise choice. Under such circumstances we may come boldly to the throne of grace, seeking help in our time of need.

One vital facet of the decision-making process is to determine whether there is a moral aspect to the problem. Is a duty involved, either to God or man, or perhaps to ourselves? Is it a duty imposed by God or by other people, or one we have imposed upon ourselves? It is not always wise to cling blindly—perhaps even stubbornly—to a self-imposed duty. Is our sense of obligation based on a plain “Thus saith the Lord,” and thus the product of an enlightened conscience operating on clear moral guidelines, or of an immature and perhaps defective conscience?

Throughout the process of reaching a decision on important matters such as those we are considering, we should be alert to evidences of God’s providential leading, in the circumstances and opportunities that may open before us. As we progress toward a decision, the time comes when our minds are clear as to the wise and appropriate course of action. It is always well, if possible, to postpone a decision until we attain to this awareness, and to avoid making major changes unless and until we are clear that a change is indicated.

As we work toward a major decision, it is well

to keep the promises of God's Word in mind, and those from the pen of His messenger to the remnant church. "If you will seek the Lord and be converted every day; if you will of your own spiritual choice be free and joyous in God; if with glad-some consent of heart to His gracious call you come wearing the yoke of Christ—the yoke of obedience and service—all your murmurings will be stilled, all your difficulties will be removed, all the perplexing problems that now confront you will be solved."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 101. What more could a person ask?

Reason and Faith in Forming Opinions

An informed Christian in the modern world must form opinions on a wide variety of secular matters on which Inspiration has provided no clear guidelines, and which are not directly related to his personal conduct though they may contribute to decisions that do involve a moral judgment. What is the proper role of faith and reason in forming an enlightened opinion on controversial matters in areas such as health, science, public affairs, and historical facts?

For instance, is fluoridation of the public water supply a safe and desirable practice? Does kre-

biozen cure cancer? Are aluminum cooking utensils dangerous? Are at least some unidentified flying objects spaceships from other worlds? Will God permit men to land on the moon and on other planets? Is the widely quoted Knights of Columbus oath genuine? Where does justice lie in various practical aspects of the civil rights problem? When voluntary collective bargaining is unable to prevent a strike that seriously affects the public interest, should compulsory, binding arbitration be required by law? Should certain governments be seated in the United Nations? Should contraceptive information and materials be distributed by public health agencies? Is capital punishment morally justified?

This is only a small sampling of questions that are, or recently have been, matters of public controversy. The list might be continued indefinitely. Doubtless some of these questions will seem somewhat irrelevant to some people. But a person who registers "no opinion" on all such matters thereby confesses that he is seriously out of touch with the world in which he lives. This raises the further question, Can he function effectively as a rational-moral being in the modern world?

Most of us probably have at least a tentative opinion on a majority of these problems. The question is, How valid are our opinions? Are they

based on reasonable evidence, or have we reached them as the result of emotional predisposition or personal bias? How shall a Christian form opinions on such matters, and what weight shall we give the opinions he holds, as against the differing opinions of others?

Our Dependence on Other People's Opinions

The first major obstacle we encounter in forming opinions on controversial matters is the impossibility for one person to have ready access to all the necessary information on which to base a valid value judgment. Six centuries ago a man could attend a university, and in a few years emerge knowing everything that just about everybody knew. But like remote galaxies in outer space, that utopian goal has been receding at a rapidly accelerating pace, until now it is extremely difficult for a person to keep adequately abreast of the advance of knowledge in even one small area of specialization. The information explosion that has been rocking modern civilization since the close of World War II is progressively complicating the problem of knowing and judging.

As a result, and in ever-increasing areas of our lives, we are becoming more and more dependent upon the knowledge and value judgments of other people. When we cannot know for ourselves, the

problem thus becomes one of knowing who is most likely to have access to the necessary facts and whose opinion is most trustworthy. Factors that contribute to one's ability to make a valid value judgment are training, experience, level-headed thinking, and emotional balance. Who is most likely to be in possession of the necessary facts relevant to the question at hand, to be competent to weigh them, and to be relatively free from personal bias and other motives that tend to warp judgment?

In all probability we will not be personally acquainted with the human authority-sources on which we must rely—at least in part—in forming our own opinions. But we can ascertain their reputed qualifications for knowing and for forming reliable value judgments on the matter in question, as recognized by their peers. Usually we can also discover whether there are personal factors—religious, political, economic, or otherwise—that might influence their judgment. Is their personal conduct above reproach? Are they beholden to any particular organization that has a religious, political, social, or economic stake in the matter? It is also important to listen to the arguments on both sides of a question. In this way we can often make a reasonably reliable, even if vicarious, value judgment.

Pitfalls in Forming Opinions

One of the most important steps in forming any opinion is to evaluate our own store of information and to make a fair and honest estimate of our own qualifications for reaching a valid value judgment. The first step toward wisdom is a candid recognition of one's own limitations in knowledge, training, and experience. It is also the part of wisdom to be aware of, and to compensate for, personal biases and emotional predispositions. As far as possible, it is well to keep one's opinions, and the process of forming them, well insulated from the emotions, which tend to distort judgment and render it less reliable. It is also true, with respect to oneself as to others, that a high level of training and experience in one area does not automatically qualify a person to be an authority in other areas.

In our own rational processes we should ever be mindful of the common dangers in reasoning. One of these is known as circular reasoning, by which a person begins by assuming as true, certain key facets of the conclusion he would like to reach. Another danger is the *non sequitur*—a flaw in the reasoning process in which a person assumes that one step leads logically to the next, when it does not. Still another pitfall is generalization on the basis of insufficient evidence. One robin does

not make a spring. Intellectual mirages are far more common than the natural variety, and can be even more fatal.

When we have done our best to secure the necessary information and the best available opinion with respect to it, we should pause to estimate the degree of reliability of the conclusion to which the evidence seems to point. There is no virtue in being positive about something that is not so. Nothing is gained by walking with Alice through her mirror into the euphoria of a wonderland where everything is either snow white or coal black, and where there are no varying gray shades of probability. A value judgment may range all the way from certain to probable, possible, or highly uncertain. However valid our opinion in any matter may seem to us, it is well to keep an open mind, to be receptive to additional information, and to be willing to change our minds if the need arises. We should compensate for diminishing degrees of certainty by a corresponding increase in our exercise of suspended judgment.

The Creator endowed man with an amazing apparatus for receiving and storing information on an almost infinite variety of subjects, for understanding this information, for synthesizing it into opinions and value judgments, and for applying these judgments to the problems of life. These fac-

ulties we call knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Even though the matters we have been considering may be thought of as primarily secular, it is nevertheless appropriate to seek divine guidance in all of our opinion forming. The Creator is honored when we develop these capacities to the full extent of our ability, as He is when we use our physical and spiritual powers to His glory.

Reason and Faith

in Human Relations

Perhaps no other aspect of life confronts us with more or greater problems, difficulties, and disappointments on the one hand, and offers greater opportunity, satisfaction, and happiness on the other, than personal relations with our fellow men. This is true in the home, among friends, in earning a living, in the church, and in the community. It applies also, in a broader way, to intergroup and international relations.

Most interperson and intergroup misunderstandings and conflicts grow out of the natural human tendency to be self-centered, to care more

about, and for, ourselves than we do for others. For this reason we often fail to understand other people, to see problems from their point of view, to enter into empathy with them. And as a result we fail to treat them as we ourselves would like to be treated under similar circumstances.

The faculties of reason, faith, and emotion were ordained by the Creator to make interperson and intergroup relations happy and rewarding experiences. But sin blunted and perverted these faculties and left them seriously out of balance. Like an automobile tire that is badly out of balance, we experience more abrasion, more wear, and a rougher ride as we hasten along through life. Personal relations are the supreme test of one's religion, for unless we learn to care about other people at least as much as we do about ourselves, our professed love for God assays in His balances as fool's gold—mere pretense and sham.

God designed that all human relations should be rooted in love, in the New Testament sense of *agapē*. In contrast with affectionate, sentimental love, which grows out of the emotions, and passionate love, which operates on the physical level only, *agapē* involves the intellect as well as the emotions. It includes affection and emotion, to be sure, but places them under the guidance and control of right reason. It is intelligent as well as emotional.

Whereas affectionate love operates primarily on the basis of feeling, reasoned love operates on the basis of principle. It seeks to apply the principles set forth in the second table of the Decalogue and in the golden rule to all personal relations with other people. Because emotional love is based on the way a person *feels*, it is often fickle and subject to change. But because reasoned love is founded on unchanging *principles*, it is steady and constant. Whereas affectionate love tends to fluctuate according to the loveliness or hatefulness of others, and even of our own feelings, reasoned love burns with a steady flame that is unaffected by the other person's response, or lack of one, or by variations in our own emotional state.

Concern for Others

The essence of reasoned love is concern for the happiness and well-being of others because of their need and irrespective of whether they deserve it or not. For this reason the frost of indifference that tends to blight and kill unrequited emotional love, leaves reasoned love untouched. All whom God loves we love, because of our love for Him and because our inherent need to love others is even more essential to being and personality than our need to be loved. Reasoned love is the only through road to genuine and lasting happiness.

Concern for others is the first step in understanding them. The better we understand people, the more fully we shall be able to enter into empathy with them, that is, to feel with them and to participate with them in their joys and their sorrows, their aspirations and their disappointments. Only as we feel for and with others are we ready truly to practice the golden rule, to deal with them as we would like them to deal with us.

With reasoned love in our hearts, our attitude toward other people is determined, not by whether we happen to like them or not, but because, as people like ourselves, they are children of our heavenly Father, and because they, too, long to succeed and to be accepted. In fact, we will prefer that they succeed, even at our expense if necessary. And strange as it may seem, as we rejoice with them in their success our own disappointment is minimized. Every attempt to benefit or advance oneself at the expense of someone else violates the New Testament principle of *agapē*, and progressively disqualifies a person for life in that better world.

As we have already noted, sin blighted man's rational-moral faculties and upset the perfect balance in which the Creator adjusted them. As a result, some people excel in faith, and others in the power of reason. In still others, emotion is stronger

than either faith or reason. To the extent that we are aware of the proportionate strength of another person's reason, faith, and emotions in influencing his thought, his actions, and his reactions, we shall find it easier to understand why he thinks and acts as he does, and thus to be patient with him. We shall have taken a long step toward getting along with him, toward applying the golden rule in our relationships with him.

Reason and Faith

in the Quest for Truth

“What is truth?” Pilate asked One who had declared but hours before, “I am . . . the truth.” Earlier in His ministry Jesus had said, “The truth shall make you free”—free, that is, from the shackles of ignorance and sin, free to function as a mature, responsible, rational-moral being created in God’s image, free to strive for the lofty ideal envisioned for man by a wise Creator, free to enter upon the happiness that only those who co-operate with Him who gave them being can ever know.

We here use the word *truth* as Christ used it

—in the sense of ultimate, objective truth about Himself as Creator and Lord, and about His infinite purpose for man. These things, obviously, a man cannot discover for himself, though they are the master keys to life. If a man is to function effectively as a free and responsible rational-moral being with respect to matters of truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil, he must have supernatural guidance. That guidance God has provided and placed on record in His guidebook to life, the Bible. In addition, He has also provided His remnant people on earth today with special counsel relevant particularly to our time.

It is a simple thing to affirm faith in the inspiration of the Bible and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. For all practical purposes both are so plain and easy to understand that anyone who reads them with sincere intent can, unerringly and without serious difficulty, find the way of salvation. But beyond this elementary knowledge, which even a child can comprehend, is an almost infinite revelation of truth sufficient in scope and depth to tax even the greatest of intellects for a lifetime. It is no simple task to bring every detail of the inspired writings into sharp focus, and unerringly to relate the principles thus set forth to the problems of the modern world, decades or dozens of centuries after they were written. Spe-

cial care is needed in dealing with these more profound aspects of Bible truth.

In the first place, finite human language is at best an imperfect medium for communicating infinite truth. Furthermore, the English Bible is a translation, and it is impossible for any translation to reflect perfectly the thought of the original at every point. To complicate matters still further, the thought and literary forms employed by the Bible writers, and their cultural and historical background, are largely alien to us. Beyond that, on relatively minor points ancient Bible manuscripts sometimes differ among themselves as to the correct reading of the passage. The result of all this is that it is not always easy to determine, in every instance, the exact thought the inspired writer sought to convey. That the problem of exact communication is very real is evident from the fact that equally sincere people often derive different ideas from the very same words.

The Profound Truths of Scripture

We have already affirmed that on all points essential to salvation the Bible is crystal clear for all who read it with sincere hearts. "If any man's will is to do his [God's] will, he shall know . . ." (John 7:17, R.S.V.). But the Bible contains profound truths over and beyond these elementary

truths of salvation which its Author evidently intended that men should stretch their minds to understand. Our remarks from this point forward are concerned with these deeper things of God's Word and with the proper balance between faith and reason in understanding them.

Ideally, every Christian should be able to read the Bible in the languages in which it was originally written, as fluently as if they were his native tongue, and be conversant with all the relevant archeological, historical, and anthropological lore of ancient times. Patently, that is impossible. At least half a dozen lifetimes would be required to master all of the currently available information that would be helpful in understanding the Bible. But be of good cheer! Despite the seeming complexity of the problem there are a few simple principles that anyone whom God has inspired to seek out the deeper truths of His Word can follow, and with reasonable certainty be able to know, in most instances at least, what the inspired writers are saying.

The suggestions relating to the balance between faith and reason in dealing with secular information, already considered, apply here also, and it is not necessary to repeat them. But there are six additional principles that apply with special force to keeping faith and reason in balance in

one's study of the Bible, in areas where faith, on the one hand, and observation, experience, and reason, on the other, overlap and may at times seem to be contradictory:

1. The Purpose of the Bible

The Bible was given to provide us with truth to which we would not otherwise have access, about God and about ourselves. It sets forth the principles of salvation and of restoration to the divine likeness, and provides us with a record of the outworking of these principles in salvation history. On all of these matters it is our authoritative and infallible guide. It was not given to acquaint us with such things as the facts of secular history or the natural world, except to the extent that these subordinate and somewhat incidental facts are essential to its primary purpose.

Furthermore, this revelation was not intended to be a substitute for man's natural faculties of sensory perception, experience, and reason—as a lazy man's short cut to information he might obtain by the proper use of the rational faculties with which the Creator endowed him—but to supplement the knowledge to which he can attain by the sanctified use of these faculties, in areas beyond his own unaided powers of observation and reason. God is not honored when we wait on Him to do

for us that which He has equipped us to do for ourselves.

The Bible was never intended for use as a textbook on such subjects as history, botany, zoology, geology, or astronomy. But it is an impressive fact that Bible statements in these areas subsidiary to its principal purpose, when rightly understood, are in full accord with data derived directly from observation and experience—in striking contrast with all other writings from the era in which the Bible was written.

2. The Role of Faith

This inspired revelation of God's will and purpose for us we accept in unquestioning faith, in full confidence that it comes from God. Genuine faith is not blind acceptance of something for which we have no rational evidence. Genuine faith always has a firm foundation in observable facts. For men in our day the supreme, pragmatic proof that the voice speaking to us through the declarations of Holy Writ is, indeed, that of God, is the fact that men and women who make an intelligent and consistent application of its principles to the practical problems of life, attain to a uniquely superior and happier way of life, one that can be evaluated by objective standards.

This palpable existential fact—one that is sus-

ceptible to observation and personal experimentation—provides modern man with a firm basis for confidence to believe that in areas not now subject to his personal observation and experimentation, the Bible speaks with equal authority and reliability. The miracle of a transformed life is the best possible evidence of the operation of a power far above and beyond that to which man, by his own unaided efforts, can attain. The best proof that the Bible is a divinely inspired, authoritative, and reliable guide, is that its principles work far better than those of any other system known to man.

With this incontestable basis for faith, no observed phenomena of the natural world or philosophical deductions drawn from them, can—or need—in the least degree diminish our confidence in what the Bible tells us about God and about our own origin, existence, duty, and destiny. In this area faith reigns supreme and unchallenged, and unbiased reason will concur.

3. The Bible a Divine-Human Book

In rebuttal to what we have said, the agnostic points to traces of human imperfection in the Bible, and cites these as evidence that it is not inspired. Those who offer this argument, however, fail to realize that the Bible is a union of divine with human elements, in some respects similar to

the union of these two natures in the Incarnate Word (see *The Great Controversy*, Introduction, p. vi). The presence of certain human elements in the Written Word in no way diminishes the authority and reliability of its God-given truths, any more than in the Incarnate Word.

Ellen G. White wrote of the presence in the Bible of what appear to be—in her own words —“inconsistencies,” “imperfections,” “difficulties,” “mistakes,” “contradictions,” copyists’ and translators’ errors, deliberate editorial changes, and reflections of the individuality and limitations of its various writers (see *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 16-22). But she hastens to affirm that all the so-called “mistakes” need not “cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble,” and that we should not permit them to “perplex or confuse us” (*ibid.*, pp. 16, 22). We are not to “lament that these difficulties exist,” she wrote, “but accept them as permitted by the wisdom of God” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 706).

Most of the problems to which skeptics delight to point arise from the misconception that if the Bible is of divine origin, it should be free from every trace of human imperfection. We freely acknowledge the presence of these human elements in the Bible, but affirm that they in no way depreciate its character or value as the infallible and

authoritative revelation of the will of God, and that it is, in verity, God's inspired guidebook for a safe journey along the highway of this life toward life everlasting.

4. Listening Attentively to the Inspired Writers

We are all prone, perhaps more often than we realize, to read our own preconceived opinions into the words of Holy Writ, unaware, betimes, that the inspired writer never intended to say what we construe his words to mean. When Bible study deteriorates into a search for the best proof texts to support what we have already decided is truth, the voice we are likely to hear as we read is not that of God, but the deceptive echo of our own preconceived ideas.

We listen to God's voice in the Bible by discovering the meaning the various inspired writers sought to convey. In our endeavor to ascertain their purpose in selecting the particular words they use, we shall weigh each word carefully in relation to the writers' own historical context and knowledge of the divine purpose, and to the literary context in which it is used. As we trace a writer's line of thought we shall endeavor to think his inspired thoughts after him, humbly praying that the Spirit who inspired him to write will inspire us to understand as we read. In other words, we shall

give each writer an opportunity to tell us what he means, by what he wrote.

In the listening process we shall make ample, but critical, use of the available tools of Bible study such as commentaries and Bible dictionaries. We will treasure the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, especially the Conflict of the Ages Series, as an inspired commentary on the Bible, distinguishing always between comment on a passage intended to elucidate its original import, and comment intended to apply Bible principles to our particular needs today. The principles themselves remain unchanged, but their application may differ from that of Bible times.

5. Correlating the Data of Faith and Reason

At points where revelation and the observed phenomena of the natural world seem to be in conflict, it is vital to keep faith and reason in balance and not permit either to usurp the rightful role of the other. God is the author of both nature and revelation, for instance, and if we knew and understood all of the facts, these seeming conflicts would disappear.

Faith and reason may be compared to a pair of terrestrial coordinates—the equator and the prime meridian of Greenwich, for instance, which intersect at a point in the Gulf of Guinea off the west

coast of Africa. The equator and the meridian cross at right angles, and may appear to be at cross purposes with each other. But as the term implies, coordinates are essential for the precise location of any point on earth, and for modern navigation by sea or air, or in space.

The intellectual coordinates of faith and reason may similarly appear to be at cross purposes because they operate on different planes, but they must be used together because truth lies at the point where they intersect. They are complementary, not contradictory. To jettison or downgrade either would be to abandon any possibility of arriving at ultimate truth in such areas as natural science and revelation.

It is also important to distinguish between the observed facts, whether of the natural world or of the Bible, and the interpretation we place upon the facts. Any seeming conflict between nature and revelation is the result either of inadequate information or of a mistaken interpretation of the evidence. This applies with as much force to our interpretation of the Bible as it does to our interpretation of the observed phenomena of the natural world. When the two appear to be at variance we should look for additional information in both areas, and re-examine our interpretation of both.

We should look also for alternate possible in-

terpretations; and of two or more that appear to have equal validity we should tentatively select the one that comports most closely with all of the evidence. Thus, when natural phenomena are subject to two or more possible interpretations, we tentatively accept the one that comports most closely with the Bible; and when a passage in the Bible is similarly subject to two or more interpretations, we accept the one that comports most closely with the observed natural phenomena.

When, for the moment, we have done our best and find that difficulties still remain, it is our privilege to exercise suspended judgment, on the one hand patiently continuing our search, and on the other re-examining our interpretation of the evidence. Only an immature mind supposes that it is either necessary or possible to obtain a complete and final answer to every question at once. The mature mind is content to do its best and then let matters rest for a time. In this life, there will always be points of truth we cannot resolve to perfection.

Suspended judgment maintains a firm faith in God and in His Word, because of the convincing evidence that it is, indeed, His Word. Suspended judgment also acknowledges the observed facts of the natural world. But it holds any particular interpretation of either, subject to further

development as new evidence becomes available. The evolutionist errs when he interprets certain observed phenomena according to his preconceived opinions, dismissing conflicting evidence as unworthy of serious consideration. The creationist similarly errs when he rejects or ignores certain observed facts in the natural world because they do not comport with his preconceived interpretations of the Bible.

6. Fellowship in the Quest of Truth

The quest for truth unites us in a bond of fellowship with all fellow Christians who are engaged in the same endeavor. We will never permit this quest to degenerate into an attempt to prove our own opinions right and someone else's wrong. Truth is truth, despite all of the ingenious arguments that can be arrayed either for or against it. If we are sincere in our own search for truth we will credit other men with being as sincere as we are, and leave with God any question as to their motives. They are His sons and our brothers in Christ, and it is infinitely more important to be motivated by the Spirit of Christ than it is to take the kingdom of heaven by force of argument. "If I . . . understand all mysteries and all knowledge, . . . but have not love, I am nothing" but "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:2, 1, R.S.V.).